W. Higher Education Research Council Policy

1. Purpose and Coverage

The Higher Education Research Council Policy presents guidelines to Boise State University, Idaho State University, Lewis-Clark State College and the University of Idaho on the most effective use of the limited resources of the State of Idaho, provided by the Legislature as a line item for research and overseen by the Higher Education Research Council, in promoting research activities that will have the greatest beneficial effect on the quality of education and the economy of the State. The implementation of this policy will be the duty and responsibility of the Board's Higher Education Research Council (HERC).

2. The Role of Research in Higher Education

Research is the creative search for and application of new knowledge.

a. Philosophical Statements and Guiding Principles

Public awareness of the significant role science, technology and other research play in our world has also been accompanied by an enhanced demand for the scrutiny of publicly funded research, accountability, and attention to the management of ethical, legal, and safety issues associated with academic research. A demonstrable return on the state's investment requires the development of a statewide strategic plan for science and technology that will assist in the identification of general research areas that will enhance the economy of Idaho via partnering between academia, industry and/or government. HERC will facilitate this partnering and interaction among business, industry and the public sector with science, engineering and other research faculty. To this end, HERC will be an active participant in the development, implementation and monitoring of the statewide strategic plan for science and technology.

This policy is designed to assist the public baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate institutions in addressing these areas via appropriate research activities through:

(1) individual and multi-disciplinary research projects;
(2) extensive and rapid dissemination of the new knowledge and establishment of knowledge networks which would facilitate public, private and academic institution interaction; and
(3) collaborative relationships between academia and varied shareholders outside the academy.

The guiding principles are:

(1) to maximize impact on the quality of education and economic development as a consequence of Idaho's investment in quality science, engineering and other research.

(2) to ensure accountability for the state's investment via demonstrable results.

b. Support of research activities with public funds is important because:

(1) Research is important in the education of students at all levels.

At the graduate level, students master current knowledge and produce new knowledge. The higher the quality of research and scholarly or creative activity in which the student is involved, the higher quality of his/her education. In addition, the education of undergraduates is enhanced through their participation in research.

(2) Research plays an important role in maintaining and enhancing faculty quality.

Active participation in research by faculty prevents obsolescence. The saying that "research informs instruction" is meritorious. Research ensures that faculty stay abreast of current developments in their field. While faculty currency and vitality is important at all three degree levels, it is absolutely essential for those educating graduate students.

Effective training of future researchers at our universities and colleges requires faculty who are dedicated to teaching. In addition, because of the rapid generation of new knowledge, departments must have active research programs in order to teach students the latest scientific innovations and in order for university investigators to seriously compete for local, industrial and federally sponsored grants.

(3) Academic research contributes to economic development.

Economic development interests are most directly served by attention to applied research which itself is based on the results of basic research. Academic institutions traditionally provide assistance in solving problems as well as in developing new knowledge. It is important that all academic institutions, particularly Ph.D. granting institutions, continue to serve these functions.

c. The Board desires to increase the quality and quantity of research and to encourage continued public support of research in Idaho through application of the following principles:

(1) The quality and quantity of academic research produced is extremely dependent upon the research infrastructure.

(2) Faculty at Idaho's baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate institutions will be eligible to compete for research funds.

d. The development and implementation of a statewide strategic plan for science and technology is a vehicle for identification of research objectives and areas

3. Specific funding programs to strengthen research in Idaho

The Board recognizes that talent exists on all of the campuses and the importance of permitting competition for research support and initiation funds. Therefore, the Board will use the following criteria in allocating funds for research activities under this policy at the various institutions.

Additionally, any condition set forth in the legislative appropriation for these research programs must be demonstrably met by the programs and/or projects that are to receive the appropriation.

a. Infrastructure

A portion of the competitive research funding should be distributed to the state's baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate institutions to support their science, engineering and other research infrastructure. Distribution of these funds will be made according to percentages approved by the Higher Education Research Council. These funds should be reserved for library support essential to research, graduate research assistantships, post doctoral fellows, technician support, maintenance contracts, research equipment, competitively awarded summer research support, start up funds for new hires, and incentives to reward faculty for their research achievements.

b. Specific Research Funding

Faculty members at the state's baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate institutions will have an opportunity to submit research project proposals for review under this program.

(1) All projects under this program must demonstrate economic benefit or cost savings for the State.

(2) A major focus under this program should be start up and seed funds that will assist a principal investigator in competing for external funding.

(3) Collaborative research projects are encouraged.

Guidelines for this program will be established by the Higher Education Research Council, will incorporate an out-of-state peer review, and will include an evaluation component for commercial applicability for the benefit of the State.

c. Research Centers

Many important advances can only be made with the establishment of focused research centers. Centers typically involve at least three faculty members in conjunction with the necessary research equipment and support personnel. The funds needed to establish centers of this type are large and, in all probability, no more than one such center per year should be established in Idaho. Minimal state funding of $250,000 per center per year for at least three years is essential to enable centers to become nationally competitive. This is

clearly a minimal amount, which should be supplemented by non-state matching funds. Multiple year funding is essential for the establishment of these centers.

d. State Matching Awards

Under this program state funds would be available to match those awarded by non-state sources by using an external peer review process.

Examples of matching entities for the state matching funds would be:

(1) Federal Agencies
(2) EPSCoR projects e.g., National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health, Department of Energy, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, etc.
(3) Foundations e.g., Murdoc, Northwest Area, Robert Wood Johnson Grants, etc.
(4) Business and Industry
(5) Other

e. Post-Award Accountability

Any project receiving funding through any of the previously described Board sponsored programs will be required to report on its productivity with respect to such items as:

(1) number of students involved;
(2) number of faculty involved;
(3) external funding earned as a result;
(4) publications in refereed journals;
(5) presentations at professional meetings and conferences;
(6) patents awarded or pending;
(7) economic benefits; or
(8) problem resolution.

Reporting procedures will be established and administered through the Higher Education Research Council.

4. State Research Council

In order to advise the Idaho State Board of Education on the implementation of the above strategies, an Idaho Higher Education Research Council, which reports to the Board through the Instruction, Research and Student Affairs Committee, shall be appointed by the Board. The assigned responsibilities of the Higher Education Research Council will include the following:

(1) determine and distribute to all interested parties the guidelines for submission of proposals under the competitive programs;

(2) organize the review procedures for proposals submitted under the guidelines mandated and recommend to the Board which of these proposals should be funded;

(3) recommend ways in which cooperative inter-institutional graduate and research programs can be encouraged, developed, and sustained; and

(4) monitor the productivity of each funded project to warrant continued funding and to provide accountability.

The membership of this Council shall consist of Presidents from each of the state's universities and the four-year college (University of Idaho; Idaho State University; Boise State University; Lewis-Clark State College), four non-institutional representatives selected from the general public who are committed to research, and a representative from the Office of Science and Technology. The State Board of Education shall appoint the four non-institutional representatives and a representative from the Office of Science and Technology who shall serve as an ex officio member with voting privileges. The chairman of the committee will be elected by the Council annually. Term length for the non-institutional members is three years.